

Family by The r3wr1t3r

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Angst, Family

Language: English

Characters: Eleven/Jane H., J. Hopper, Mike W., Terry Ives

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-09-26 21:43:54

Updated: 2019-09-26 21:43:54

Packaged: 2019-12-12 17:35:43

Rating: M

Chapters: 1

Words: 9,324

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Since closing the gate and coming, a sharp pain always lingered at the back of her mind. What they did to mama hung like a never-ending cloud that sucked up sunlight whenever she thought she could move on. Now its time to confront it. Two-shot

Family

Stranger things three was something. Didn't necessarily like it, but I gotta admit that ending has some promise and I can't wait to see how El is going to deal with the loss of her powers and her loss of Hopper. Plus moving away. Plus, her potentially dealing with not fitting in at school. Plus dealing with Brenner maybe? The set up looks nice, I just hope they stay away from the cliché and illogical things (teen drama, especially Mike and El, Super overprotective parents, kids infiltrating a Russian base with little to no resistance, and stupid bickering between adults) which I think they will because it seem like Season 4 will deal with more emotional and important issues. Of course, season 3 wasn't all bad (El learns to be more independent, cool graphics, Billy and the mindflayer, Will's story line until they dropped it, and scoops troop) but there was still a lot wrong. Sorry if I upset anyone, and I know I'm being overly critical, but the standards I have for Stranger things are literally the highest period. In the end, a below average season is better than like 95 percent of TV so..

Anyway, this is a two-shot that I've had in mind, even if it doesn't make sense, I have to write it because I thought it would be so good. Hopper is alive and season 3 didn't happen. Slight AU after season 2. Also the next chapter may come out well after the first, so if you hate long wait times turn a way now.

XX

Hawkins Indiana 1986

It was dark, she observed quite noticeably. The water on the floor rippled, the noise pinging throughout the abyss of desolation. Her feet felt cold, especially since they were bare. The goosebumps popped down her skin, and the hair on her neck spiked up. She opened her eyes with a sharp exhale of breath, her eyes darting to figure out where she was. Eyes widening in realization, she spun around searching for the answer as to how she ended up there.

The void was hollow and frightening, but the fear of it had all but

dissipated over the years. Before it was a strange, hellish, place that papa had made her go into against her will. It had been the thing that had brought the Demogorgon into the world, but she had also used it to visit Mike in those 353 of isolation. She used it to find Kali (even though that didn't end as well as she thought as it would) and it warned her that everyone needed her help.

Still, she hadn't really ended up in the void on accident for a long time. There had been nights she thought about Kali and then when she fell asleep the void would take El to her. She was usually huddled up with the others in some alley or warehouse looking miserable, angry, or just stoic.

She had thoughts about her friends dying to Demogorgon, the bad men, or papa, and those nights she would randomly appear at their bedside as they snored away.

The worse though, was when she thought about mama. The void would take her to that house, and mama would be there in that creaking rocking chair swinging idly, no emotion on her face, repeating the same words over and over again like one of Hopper's broken records. She tried talking, yelling, touching, but no matter what mama would say the same words "breathe, sunflower, three to the left, four to the right, rainbow." After trying until her nose was gushing blood and her brain was spinning in her head, she was forced out. Then she would cry, and Hopper had to sometimes run into her room to calm her down, but she was pretty good at hiding it from him at this point. She didn't like being a burden.

It was at time like those that Kali's words had come back to her, reminding her of all she had lost. The chance to be normal; to be smart like all the boys; to have long flowing hair like all the other girls; to not have to ask about every little thing she didn't understand; to not get uncomfortable from a can of coke or cats. She would get angry and the thoughts of vengeance came whispering sweetly in her ears, but after Chicago the anger quickly fled and all that was left was remorse.

Mama had wanted her, actually wanted her. She built a crib, a whole room for room just for her. She fought the bad man, running into the lab to save her. She cared. Not like how papa said he cared, but like

how the party, Joyce, and Hopper care. Mama had loved her before anyone else, and now she was stuck. Forever. The pain on her mama's face when papa had made the bad man shock her brain was hammered into her skull forever. The wrinkles, the suppressed scream wanting to burst free, and her eyes when all the light left them.

She knew it wasn't her fault, but guilt always crawled out of her heart knowing that if mama hadn't come for her, she would have been safe. So, she tried to shove mama out of her mind, the thoughts her too painful to bear, and it seemed like void complied.

Until now.

Mama was laying down in her bed, but her eyes were wide, eerily unblinking. The words came as they always did, and El turned away, her throat was already tightening, and her pupils burning hotly. She moved away and prepared to run as far as she could, but suddenly she was jerked back. Spinning around quickly, she was met with the eyes of her mama, piercing through her. El felt her body shake with fear, what was happening? Mama was grabbing her so tight it was bruising.

"Jane," She whispered. El's eyes dilated, mama had only talked to her once before.

"Come." The hand grasping her wrist turned to smoke and mama followed soon after, leaving El screaming and crying.

El shot up in her bed with a gasp. The room was as cool as the void, just as dark too. The only indication that she was back was the soft comforter strewn across her body, and the crickets chirping outside.

The tears were leaking from her eyes, and the soft sobs were forcing their way out of her throat no matter how hard she tried to contain them. Her door was closed, and Hopper would be asleep a long time now. So she turned around, her face against the pillow, and let out her torrent of emotions as quietly as possible.

Morning

She woke to the harsh sunlight penetrating through her window blinds. The smell of eggs and bacon were strong, and it seemed her stomach was made acutely aware of that fact. Maybe it was because she had fell asleep only after all the energy had left her body. She slowly tumbled out of her bed and dragged herself to her bathroom. When it reached summer, Hopper had sold his small house on the lake and upgraded.

He had his own room now, so he didn't have to sleep on the couch. They also had their own separate bathrooms, a decently sized dining room, kitchen, and living room. It surprised her when he bought all these things, because he told her that you needed a thing called money to buy them and apparently, he didn't make much as a chief of police in a small town. Still, she invited the space nonetheless, it was good compared to the lab and cabin, not cramped and distant from everything else.

After heading out the bathroom, she walked to the dining room ready to devour her food. Hopper was there, a newspaper in hand. His attention shifted as she walked in, and he set the newspaper down as she took a seat.

"Well kid, you sure got up late. I know its summer and everything, but jeez," He stated.

"Time?" she asked dismissively, grasping at the bacon.

"Eleven o'clock," He responded. She hummed, seemingly not caring about the late time of day.

"Don't you have to go over to Mike's today." Hopper asked. She nodded absentmindedly, preferring to instead shove the bacon in her mouth and chug orange juice. She was always enthusiastic with her food, there were so many flavors of things she had never tried before. Hopper had told her to slow down and use her utensils, but right now that was not on her mind.

"Are you okay?" Hopper asked with an eyebrow raised.

She flicked her eyes up at him and bit quite harshly into a piece of toast but made no move to respond to the question. She could tell

that he knew something was up with her. They had lived together about one and a half years now. He knew that she liked the old records on his player. He knew that she got annoyed at when he dissed her soaps. He knew that she rose early every day, probably from habit at the lab. And he most certainly knew that her eyes weren't black and crusty for no reason.

"What's that thing you keep telling me? Friends don't lie," he says, quite pointedly. Her eyes immediately go to the plate, suddenly looking a little ashamed. Yes, friends didn't lie she thought a little ruefully. She drops her food and lets out a sigh.

"You lied," she whispers.

"What?"

"About mama," She stares at him. "When you told me, she was gone." He quirked an eyebrow, this seemed like it was coming out of left field.

"Kid I told I was sorry," he scratches his beard awkwardly. El doesn't look satisfied with his response though, preferring instead to flip the piece of toast in her hands, a far off look in her eyes.

"Why?" she asks, her eyes meeting his. "Why did you lie about that?" the quiver in her voice is noticeable. Hopper mulls over his response, not answering for several moments before scooting his chair close to hers.

He looks at her, soft and comforting like he does when she has a nightmare, and grabs one of her hands. Hopper wasn't much for physical contact, sure he would ruffle her hair every now and then, but hugs were rare, and they hadn't held hands since that night at the gate. Of course, she knew that didn't mean he didn't care, it was just how he was.

"Well one, I thought you would want to run off and find her, and I couldn't have you do that. It would have put you in danger." Of course, she had heard the same lecture for almost every day at the cabin, and though she hadn't understood then, she had now.

"And second." He licks his lips, apprehensive to say the words. "It's hard sometimes. Seeing someone you love like that. Your mom she loved you kid. I just didn't have the heart to tell you she was like that. It hurts, I didn't want you to hurt. I know what its like.." And suddenly she sees that Hopper is very sad, it's in his eyes, like he's rewinding some tape on a VCR.

He coughs a little. "Is that why you look like you haven't slept, been thinking about your mom,"

She nods reluctantly.

"The void took me to her. She said 'Jane, Come.' Should we go to her?" she asks as if he could help clear her reluctance. She watches as he leans back in his chair, seemingly taking the news in.

"Um, do you want to?" he asks.

Her gaze falls back down. "I don't know." Then it becomes quiet and El isn't sure she said something wrong. She should want to go see mama, right? She was calling for her, yet every time she thought of her, El's heart lurched and that guilt came crawling nastily out of her heart, like a rat from the sewer.

"Look, kid if you need to talk to someone, I'm here," He tilts her chin up. " I..care about you, you know that," He smiles and wraps his arms around her. His frame is large and burly, but all-encompassing and comforting just the same. Her worries ebb slightly, and the embrace seems to return her to normal for now. The hug ends, and El wipes tears from her eyes.

"Thank you."

Wheeler residence

Hopper drops her off to Mike's door and she waits patiently outside after ringing the doorbell. Mike's house is a lot bigger than hers. She never really thought much of it, and she still really didn't, but she noticed it now since Hopper talked to her about money. Mike told her his dad worked in consulting and made a good amount of money from it. Mike's mom a was housewife, so she did things like clean,

make food, and take care of the kids. Max scoffed at the description, declaring that shit was old fashion. The door to the house moves slightly, and Mike's mom appears, a ladle in her right hand, and her features brighten considerably after seeing El.

Mike's mom was a nice woman. She was always polite, made her food, and complemented her a lot. It also helped that she was Mike's girlfriend, because his mom had confessed to her that she was afraid that he was never going to get over DnD, videogames, and comics long enough to look for a girl and do some normal teenage things.

Max had even told her that Mrs. Wheeler liked El more than her because she acted like a proper lady. She didn't know what that had meant of course, but Max had told her it was because she was quiet and polite, while Max was rambunctious and sassy. El didn't see how that made a difference because she liked Max the way she was, so why wouldn't Mrs. Wheeler?

"Jane, it's nice to see you! Come in," she says, ushering her inside. Of course, they had to make a cover story for her as to not arouse suspicion. She was Jane Hopper, Jim Hopper's illegitimate daughter that he had out of wedlock. When her mom got sick, Hopper found out about her through child services and took her in. Consequentially, it left a blemish on his reputation somewhat, but it bolstered it also when the town saw he was taking responsibility for his actions.

Part of her felt bad about lying to Mrs. Wheeler. She was so nice to her, and friends didn't lie but it was necessary in this case.

"El!" Mike exclaimed, jumping off the Living room couch and sprinting towards her.

"Hi Mike." She smiles shyly. While Mrs. Wheeler was great, Mike was the best part of coming to the Wheeler residence. This past year had been filled with memories and romantic moments that Max said were cheesy as hell but cute as shit. Dancing with Mike at the snowball, him stumbling over words to ask her to be his girlfriend, buying her gifts on valentine's, or just sitting and teaching her about history, science, or comics. His affection never dulled.

"Where is everyone," She asked, looking around.

"Uh well, Lucas had to do something for his mom and Max went with him, so I radioed everyone telling them to get here an hour later, but I guess I forgot to call you.." he trails off and she gave him a slightly amused look.

"Well I didn't, I just figured, you know, some alone time would be nice." He admits bashfully and truly she doesn't mind.

"Okay." She agrees and he reaches for her hand tugging on it to lead her to the basement. Before they can go to the steps, however, she hears some shouting come from the living room. Mike lets go of her hand, alert and aware, and rushes into the living room with her following close behind.

"Mom, stop!" Holly laughs as soon as Mike and El get into the living room. Mrs. Wheeler is on top of Holly, tickling her sides incessantly, a wide smile on her face. Soon Mrs. Wheeler complies and she pulls off her daughter. She seems to glance off somewhere, looking suddenly startled.

"Oh my God, we have to get your over to the Petersons. Come here," Holly walks over and sits in front of Mrs. Wheeler grabs a two long strands of her hair and starts to braid her hair while Holly plays with some dolls.

"Mom, you almost gave me heart attack." Mike says causing her to turn around and look at them.

"Oh, sorry Michael." She says slipping a pin into Holly's hair. The doorbell rings suddenly and Karen rushes to the door, dragging Holly close behind her. She flings the door open and starts greeting some man for a while and Mike takes that as the queue to leave. He turns to El, ready to take her to the basement, but is surprised to see her eyes transfixed on her mom. The look so intense and startled she almost looks like when he found her in the rain all those years ago.

"Thanks for picking up Holly Jeff, Ted needs me to drop something off for him," Her attention turns to Holly, she presses a quick kiss to her head. "Love you," she says, smiling affectionately.

"Love you." Holly replies and soon the man is leading her to the car where Holly starts shouting to her friend.

"Michael," She says, turning around. "Do you and Jane need a snack or something," She asks.

"No mom, we're good," He takes her hand and leads her down to the basement. They take a seat on Mike's couch and he tentatively starts to let go of her hand, but she doesn't let him. He looks at her slightly surprised, but he knew there was already something wrong.

"El," He says softly. "Is there something wrong?"

"Nothing," she replies.

"El," he chastises softly squeezing her hand. She doesn't say anything for a long while. She hated feeling like this, getting so emotional. She didn't want to be that girl anymore.

"Your mama is nice," She says finally, confusing him even further.

"Yeah, I guess," He says, not knowing how to respond.

"Is that how it is, with every mama," she asks. A surprising question, but it's not like El hadn't asked him about stuff like this before. Mike turns the question around in his head, pursing his lips and bobbing his head.

"Yeah, unless the mom is really mean. I don't know some parents can be bad, like you know.." he glances at her and doesn't continue because she already knows what he means.

"But mostly, yeah. You love them because their family, and you love family no matter what," Mike concludes, and suddenly it seems like some circuit had been connected in his brain. "Is that what you're upset about?" he asks. El nods her head slightly.

"I was thinking about mama," Of course, Mike knew about El's mom. She had told him shortly after she closed the gates. After a tearful and stressful day, El fell asleep in the blanket fort but that night Mike couldn't seem to catch any. It was just awful, just plain terrible what those fuckers did to El's mom. He couldn't imagine it, being stuck in a

loop forever, it sounded like torture.

"She visited me in the void. She told me to come to her," Mike took that news with some surprise. By some, he definitely meant a lot.

"I don't know if I want to." She admitted.

"Why?" he asks, and El shuffles around in her spot, clearly uncomfortable.

"Whenever I see mama, it makes me so angry. I want to do bad things to the bad men, but I can't. I don't want to be.. like them. Then I think if mama never came for me, she would be safe and happy, then I just think it's my fault. Everything, I-I don't know maybe things would be better if- "

"El," He cuts in harder than ice, and that passion burns bright in his eyes. "Don't say that. It's not your fault. Any of it, the Demogorgon, Will, or your mom." She looks at his eyes, shimmering and soft.

"El you don't have anything to be guilty for. Those pieces of shit did terrible things to you and your mom. They all deserve to rot in hell. I don't know where I'd be without you. You're awesome, and I'm pretty sure your mom would have come for you no matter what," He gazes at her with such intensity, as if the scenario had just played out in his head. "I know I would too," he finishes.

Suddenly she feels as if everything Mike says its right, it wasn't her fault. It was papa and the bad men. Mama would have come for her no matter what, because she loved her. They were family, and family loved each other no matter what. El realized that if Mike or any of her friends were taken, she would storm into the lab and kill everyone no regrets whatsoever.

"Mike." She asks putting her arms around his neck.

"Yes."

"Will you come with me?"

"Yeah."

"Mike."

"Yeah."

She leans in and captures his lips.

"You're awesome too."

Saturday

And they're in a car.

"Really, you brought trail mix?" Max says, slightly condescending.

And by they're, she meant everyone. She had told the party that they were doing to visit her mom, because she had to explain why she wasn't going to be there to go to the arcade that Saturday. Max had passionately declared that she was going to go support El, and Lucas followed soon after, and then they all tumbled like dominos assuring her that they would be there for her. A very touching and nice moment for her, but a very annoying and irritating car ride for Hopper.

"We need sustenance alright!"

"You're the only one eating it!"

"Not true, come on Lucas I gave you some right?"

"Um can you just get out of my lap."

"I can't help it! This car doesn't exactly have the most space."

"Jesus!" Hopper yells, his eyebrows twitching. "Can you shits just shut up for 5 minutes!" Immediately they all go silent, scared to death of what they chief of police would do to them. Dustin mutters something about a murder coverup, voice shaking and frightful. On the other hand, El cracks a small smile because it's definitely funny to see Hopper getting so annoyed.

They had been crammed into Hopper's police cruiser for a solid forty minutes and were practically at her mama's house by now. Those

forty minutes had been spent with Dustin being funny/annoying, Max yelling at him, and Lucas trying to calm the whole situation down while she, Mike, and Will looked on.

The trip had been nice, she was seated next to Mike in the passenger seat because there hadn't been enough room in the back. They mostly stared out the window and looked at tall trees and grass that cascaded down Indiana's countryside. Still, her worry increased the closer the more the signs changed, reminding her that the inevitable was coming. How would aunt Becky react to her? What did mama want to see her about? Could she even look at mama before breaking out it to tears?

"Alright we're almost there," Hopper declares, turning onto another small road. Her nervousness only increases, her heart leaping. She bites her lower lip to try and calm herself, but it has little effect because she can feel it gripping her. It forces sweat out of her forehead and causes her to shake her leg. Her breathes are getting shallow now, small and harsh, if it kept going-

She feels a warm hand intertwine with hers and she looks up to see Mike looking at her with a smile. He doesn't say anything, but just looking at him smiling at her is reassuring, like he's trying to say everything is going to be fine. El smiles back, and suddenly her fear is pushed aside for now. It's especially funny when she notices Hopper roll his eyes at their seemingly inseparable need to be with each other.

Five minutes later they pull down a road called Fletcher Street and come to a slow stop on the side of the street just ahead of the mailbox.

"Alright let's go and remember don't do anything stupid." Hopper says sending them all a look. The all nod obediently, because it seems like now the seriousness of the situation has set in and all laughter and conversation has come to cold and screeching halt.

Hopper gets out of his door and the rest soon follow his lead. They lumber slowly and cautiously up concrete driveway, and El can feel her steps getting heavier with each step. They're about ten yards from the house when her legs dry and turn to cement. The house is right

there, mama is right there. She swallows, that nervous grip coming back to ensnare her once again, but Hopper nudges her, giving her the best reassuring look he can muster and it's all she needs.

She nods at him, takes a shaky breath, and strolls up to door. Her finger strikes the button on the side and the doorbell goes off with a resounding chime. They wait there in silence, each second her heart racing faster and faster until she hears it pumping in her ears. The lock opens with a sharp click and finally the door lulls open with cringing squeak.

"Look I don't- "aunt Becky cut herself off as she looks at El. The shock is evident, and the tension set in, heavier than a mountain. Becky is staring at her, pretty much ignoring the rest of the party. She looks like she has a million things to say but can't unclog the words from her throat. Hopper walks up beside El, his hat in his hands, preparing to be the peacekeeper.

"Becky-"

"It's you," Becky says, looking right at her. El swallows and nods her head slowly.

"Where did you go?" she basically screamed and El flinches at the volume. Hopper steps in between them and puts a hand on Becky's shoulder.

"Look Becky, we I know you must be confused about everything. But we promise to explain everything okay, just let us in," Hopper says, in that soothing voice of his. Becky's eyes don't leave El's figure for a long time, but eventually she retreats back into the house. Hopper's gaze flicks to them and then they all follow him inside.

The house is quiet, no voices, TV, or radio. The lights are mostly off, and even though it's the middle of the day the house is dark and shadows dance on the walls. It almost felt like the party was walking into some type of haunted house. They walk into the living room, and the kids squish into the couch while Hopper elects to stand in front of the TV. Becky takes her seat and looks at them as if to say, "you can start now."

"Look, I know us showing up to your doorstep with Jane is weird and all, but I found her in the woods about two years ago when she escaped the lab and she's been staying with me ever since." Hopper says mincing no words. Becky bores her eyes into him with such hurt, almost like she's been betrayed by a long-time friend.

"So, what you've been keeping her this whole time!" Hopper nods his head, the volume of her voice not perturbing him.

"Yeah, I got some help from one of the doctors at the lab and he helped me get a birth certificate."

Becky stares in disbelief.

"You have to understand Becky, I had to keep her safe. You know there were people looking for her."

"You should have left us known at least! We can keep a secret chief, she's my niece!" Becky screeches. Her face is turning red and her voice is coming out hoarse. The kids turn their heads to the floor, the situation too tense for their liking.

"Becky, I'm sorry but I didn't take any risks. I kept her in a cabin out in the woods for a whole year and then some before all the heat died down. Trust me it was driving her crazy, but we had no choice and I'd do it again." Hopper says, and Becky turns away not liking those words.

"We have a right to know, she's part of this family." Becky says harshly. For the first time since they got into the house, Hopper looks noticeable uncomfortable.

"What were you going to do with her? I got her papers. She's going to school soon. Becky I'm sorry but if she stayed with you, then El wouldn't be able to go to school, college; she wouldn't even be a real person." Hopper points out. That seems to quiet Beck for a minute, El can tell that even though she didn't like it, Becky understood.

"Then why was she here last year?!" Becky demanded.

"Well she did something very stupid and ran away," Hopper said giving El a look. "But she wanted to see her mom and it's not like I

could blame her," Becky for her part doesn't even know what to say. Finally, her gaze flicks to El.

"I've been worried sick, what if something happened to you! This whole year I've been wondering where Terry's daughter went. Is she living in the streets, is she alive! Is she dead! I didn't even know! Did the government get her! Terry would never forgive me!" Becky unleashes a barrage of words and accusations at her one after the other, tears streaking down her face, desperate and sorrowful.

"I'm sorry." Is all El can manage to squeak out. It was true, she was sorry that she didn't visit as soon as she could. Mama and Becky were worried about her. She remembers when Mike thought she was gone and everyday must have been torture wondering where she was.

Becky puts her face in her hands, concealing her tears from the rest of the party.

"Why come back now then?!" Becky questions.

El bites her lip. "Mama told me come to her... in the void."

"The void?" Becky asks perplexed.

El nods. "Remember, the place in my mind. When I talked to mama last year."

Now that she mentions it where was mama? El glances around the room and mama was nowhere to be seen as evidenced by the still rocking chair that sat in front of the TV.

"Where is mama?" El asks. Becky's eyes suddenly avert to the floor, and immediately her mind races. The dread builds up inside her, and the goosebumps send shock throughout her body. Her stomach twists and knots and this feeling of unbelievable panic worms its way inside of her.

"She's . . . not," Becky struggles to force the words out of mouth and El feels her whole body go numb, like she had just jumped into a freezing lake. It couldn't be mama, she was. She couldn't have, mama had told her to come!

Becky gets up and goes through one of the Hallways and El is right there, practically stepping on her heels. The whole party is behind her, but she doesn't even hear them. Eventually they make their way to a room, and a mixture of stench hit her nose. Some of them foul, some of them sterile like the smell of the lab.

El feels the lump in her throat as aunt Becky moves and she can finally see the scene. Her mama is laying there in a hospital bed. A heart rate monitor beeps monotonously on her left side, fleeting and soft. Bunches of wires and tubes are jutting out of her arm, as if to indicate how damaged she is. She looks terrible, her face is pale, whiter than sheets, and if possible, her eyes seem more like marble ones found in marionettes. She's staring up at the ceiling and some drool dribbles down the side of her face.

El lets out a choked whimper, akin to the whine of a dying animal. Desperate and childlike. She feels so ugly, so so ugly and disgusted, almost like she wants to vomit. Its worst feeling, she has ever experience in her life. Worse than papa. Worse than anything. She glances at Becky, but the woman refuses to say a word. She immediately rushes to mama's bedside and begins to cry out.

"Mama! Mama!" She yells so loudly that her voice breaks and cracks. El grasps her hand tightly wishing that she could get some sort of response from those lifeless cold eyes.

"Mama Please!" She hysterical now and it seems like everyone can tell. Her voice is so pleading, wishing for all this to be a bad dream or something. Her tears rush and the veins in her neck bulge from the stress, unrelenting.

Mama's mouth opens, because she hears the saliva smack. El stops her crying immediately as to make sure not to miss the words. A glimmer of hope.

"Breathe, sunflower, three to the left, four to the right, rainbow."

El feels her body shatter. She lets go of mama's hand and falls back onto the floor, dazed. She brings her legs close to her body and completely falls apart. She lets out the earth-shattering scream, the snot runs freely from her nose, and the tears fall down her face.

Hopper immediately rushes to her and scoops her up, but she refuses to go. She kicks and yells and shouts, punching him in his chest. Pictures fly off the wall, and vases shatter. Hopper forcibly drags her to the living room. She cries, she cries, and she cries. She cries until every ounce of strength is gone. Until her nose covered in blood, and her head in pounding against her skull. Until her heart goes numb, and her eyes run out of tears. Until her screams grow soundless and her vision darkens.

...

"So, what's wrong with her," Hopper asks. By now El had fallen asleep on the couch and Hopper had moved her to the guest bedroom, the kids stayed diligently by her side. He and Becky were in the kitchen, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. Apparently the smoke detector didn't work because when Becky lit up, and smoke curled around it, not a sound was made.

"Doctors say everything is shutting down. Say she'll be lucky to last a couple more days." She says with a little snuffle. Hopper nods, gripping his cup. One more thing the lab took away from her. It was only a matter of time; Terry was going to die and there was nothing they could do.

El would lose her mom.

He shallows harshly at the thought of her face when they had just seen the condition Terry was in. How weak and pale she looked. How her body just screamed that it was time. It reminded him of another life. Where he was gazing on a hospital bed, looking at those tired defeated eyes. Hoping that it wouldn't come, and feeling the shock and ruin when it inevitably did. Now El would face the same thing.

A beat of silence passed. Hopper observed Becky's hands shake as she took hit after hit of her cigarette. The stress seemed to add 30 years to her face.

"Look I'm sorry for all the broken stuff, I'll pay for it," Hopper said.

She didn't even raise her head. "Don't bother," She sniffed again and took another hit. "I still can't believe it."

Hopper raised an eyebrow. "Believe what?" he asked.

"That Terry was right. That the government actually took her baby. That she had superpowers. That she was in that lab. That they were using her to fight the commies. And I didn't believe her. I called her crazy. Jesus." She covered her eyes again with the palms of her hands, and it looked like she could burst into tears at any moment, but she held firm.

"Hey, I still have trouble believing it myself. You couldn't have known," Hopper says, in a comforting voice.

Becky lightly pounds her fist against her forehead. "I should have believed her. It was the government wasn't it."

"Huh?" Hopper asked.

"Why she ended up like that. Like a zombie, saying the same shit over and over." She says.

Hopper glances away, but he doesn't conceal the truth. "Yeah. Shocked her while she was trying to save Jane."

Becky scoffs humorlessly. "Of course, she would."

He looks at her and the sight is also another familiar one. Becky looks a lot like Joyce in that moment. Maybe it's just his mind trying to draw connections to her, but he can't help but seeing it. She's smoking cigarettes just as fast as Joyce did when Will went missing. She just looked completely broken, everything she knew had been turned upside down. He imagines the guilt that she must have felt in the past year, and it makes him cringe.

"Look, I know things are hard right now," he starts, and Becky looks at him. "I just want you to know if you need someone to talk to-"

"Please spare me the therapist bullshit. I don't need anyone; I've been taking care of myself and Terry for seven years." She cuts in harshly and Hopper clenches his jaw but doesn't respond. Just before the mood turned completely sour, Will runs into the room.

"El's awake!" he says and immediately Hopper and Becky follow him

into the bedroom.

When Hopper enters the door, he sees that Mike is sitting close to her, trying to talk to her, but she doesn't seem to register anything around her. All her friends sit around, looking solemn and unsure of what to do.

"El." Hopper says walking up to her.

"Mama is going to die isn't she," She says robotically, catching everyone off guard. How she just knew, no room for doubt. No one responds, not even Mike. Hopper swallows, he's not going to lie, he learned what that does already.

"Yeah." He whispers.

She nods tightly and her face pinches painfully, but then she lays back down and doesn't move.

The kids and Hopper stay over, he calls all their parents and informs them that Jane's mom has fallen really ill and that they had to stay a few days. They had put up some resistance but begging from their children and the sad circumstance had prevented them from driving up there and getting them.

Mike hasn't left El's side all day. She mostly just stayed in the bed, sometimes she would waltz into her mom's room, hold her hand, say words to her, and try not to cry when she said the same words over again.

It was a cycle of tortuous pain, and Mike could barely stand it. El was hurting badly and for the first time he couldn't do anything.

When she was self-conscious about her hair, he would call her pretty and assure her that she was more beautiful than any girl in the world.

When she thought she was dumb, he told her that she had learned so much in such a short amount of time. He couldn't have done that, no. She was smart, smarter than a lot of people.

When she had said she wasn't normal, while gazing at her tattoo, he boldly exclaimed fuck normal and kissed her.

But what could he do now? Nothing.

El was refusing to say anything to anyone and it's not like he could really blame her. He just wanted to do something, anything to make her feel better, but no matter how much he racked his brain no solution came to his mind. How could you comfort someone whose mom was dying? The closest Mike had ever come to that is when he thought Will was dead, but that had barely lasted an hour and that hour was complete devastation.

"El, do you want some food or something," he asks politely.

"No," she replies curtly.

"Okay," he says awkwardly.

He taps his knee, glancing around the room. He's sitting on the bed but El is laying down, facing away from him.

"Do you want to talk to the others," He asks.

"No."

His eyes dart to the bedsheets at her lack of response.

"Do you-"

"Mike, shut up," she says.

Mike's eyes widen and air is caught in his chest. El, in the two years that he's known her, had never told him to shut up. But he understands, this is a hard time for her, he said some hurtful things when he thought Will was gone, so he obediently remains quiet as El pretends or tries to sleep.

After 30 minutes, he sighs, and El stirs at this miniscule noise.

"Mike, can you just leave for a while." She says, still not facing him.

His eyes widen at her request, did El not want him here? "El, I'm sorry. I won't make any more noise-

"Mike, I want to be alone." She slightly turns to him, but he can't even see the edge of her eye. He realizes that she's waiting for him to leave.

"But El-"

"Mike," She says, and that left no room for debate. With some frustration and sadness, he heaves himself off the bed, glances at her one last time, and exits the room.

In the living room, everyone is doing something. The TV is on, and Will and Dustin are watching some episode of Star trek. Max and Lucas are playing scrabble, smiling just a bit at one of the words that Max put down, probably something crude. Hopper and Becky are drinking coffee and talking about something that is out of earshot.

Mike walks briskly out of the room and by the members of the room, who seem to notice his excitable behavior.

"What happened?" Dustin asked, ever curious.

"Nothing." He says and walks out the front door and onto the porch. The screen door squeaks closed as everyone seems to look at each other in confusion. It was obvious something happened, but what no one had an inkling as to what. Max gets up from her seat next to Lucas.

"Where are you going," Lucas asks.

She turns back to back to him and gives him a smile. "Where you think Sinclair?"

With that she walks to the front door and steps through. Immediately she feels that it is blazing hot. Its stuffy, and the wind only seems to carry the heat from place to place. Mike is sitting on the stairs, looking out onto the trees. His eyes scrunched from the glare of the Sun or something else, she didn't know. She can tell that he hears her coming, but he just continues to stare off.

She sits beside him, the old stairs creak, and she gazes at the trees with him.

"So, what's the problem Wheeler," She says casually.

"Nothing," He replies automatically.

"Uh Uh Uh, friends don't lie," She says teasingly.

He doesn't move, and for a second she thinks he's going to play the silent card. "I wish I never said that shit," he sighs, and Max almost laughs at the deadpan look on his face.

"So?" she asks, the giggles dying in her throat. He looks apprehensive, looking at his shoes, and picking at his nails.

"Well, I don't know. It's just El. She told me to shut up and kicked me out the room." He says softly.

Max almost scoffs at the answer. "That's it? I mean Mike come on; she's going through something tough right now."

He immediately looks defensive, waving his hands in the air "I know, I know. It's not just that."

"Well?" she asks, looking like the answer won't impress her.

Mike once again stumbles to get his words out. "Well, it's just. She's hurting bad Max. She's hurting so bad. I can't do- I really.. care about her. It's not fair, everything she had to go through. I could help her. Now she has to go through this. I thought – I thought, I could help her, with everything. But this? I don't know what to do. What do I do?" Mike says turning to her for the first time, his eyes searching and confused.

Max furrows her eyebrows, and it looks like all the mirth is gone.

"Yeah it sucks," She states, turning to him. "But I hate to break this to you, there's nothing you can do." She says bluntly. Mike looks ready to jump up in protest, but she beats him to it.

"Look, this is something you can't help her with," She states firmly.

"What, what do mean? I'm supposed to do nothing?" he asks, quite vehemently.

"I'm not saying that. It's just the pain," She looks at him in the eyes. "The pain isn't going to go away no matter what and that's just how it is. Its good, let her feel it. It means – it means she's going to remember. If someone dies, I think we would want to remember right? Not get over it as quickly as possible. Try and forget about them? No. She has to work through it, then hopefully she can make peace with it. She'll never forget though. We just gotta be there to help her," Max finishes staring off into the trees once again, as a light wind blows by wistfully punctuating the statement.

For the second time that day, Mike is astounded. He didn't know Max had thoughts like that. Was she right? Pain was the only thing that El seemed to feel for most of her life. Still, it wouldn't be right to try and make her forget about everything. It shaped her, made her brave. It made her value promises and friends. It made her curious about everything. It's what brought her to him and his friends. It's what her life was, and what it was now. El wouldn't be the same El without it.

He breathed in the smell of grass and leaves.

"You're right." He sighs. "But it still blows."

Max gives a slight chuckle.

"Damn Wheeler you're funny today." He gives a slight smile.

"I'll be there for her. Thanks Max."

She raises her fist and Mike collides it with his own, and they smile at each other.

They both walk inside, and Hopper is there to greet them as soon as they do. He looks at Mike with a solemn gaze.

"She's calling for you kid." He says. Max looks at him, but he just nods at Hopper and proceeds to El's room.

The faint beat of a heart monitor catches his ears as he's makes his way. He peers through the doorway, and El's mom is laying on her back, still staring at the ceiling. Her eyes are glazed over, and even from here he can hear the faint whisper. "Breathe, sunflower, three to the left, four to the right, rainbow."

He turns away, and hot tears spring into his eyes. Feeling pain is one thing, but not being able to feel anything at all, that must be the absolute pinnacle of suffering.

Her mind seeing the same things over and over

Wait.

Mind.

Seeing.

He knows he can't take El's pain away, but she deserves something to help and he knows exactly how to as he bounds to El's room. They might have to pay a visit to a certain sister.

They are gathered in the living room. He told El that he had something really important to say to everyone, and apparently the way he said it had actually made her leave the bed, albeit sluggishly and lazily.

He walked up to the TV and shut it off. Everyone groaned and whined, screaming curses and bouts of annoyance.

"Dude what the hell?" Dustin yelled.

"Yeah, that was a good episode," Max complained. Everyone turned to her in surprise.

"What, I like Star Trek." She admitted.

Mike shrugs it off, as El appears from out the hallway. Everyone seems hypersensitive of that fact and immediately focus all their attention to her. She's looking at the floor still, a small blanket draped across her body.

"What going on here kid?" Hopper asks, immediately coming into the living room at the sight of El, Becky following close behind.

"I just figured something out." He declares. He turns to El and grasps her hand, even though she doesn't seem to reciprocate. "El, your mom, she's stuck that what you said right?"

The question weighs heavy, and nobody seems to know why Mike would bring up such a question. They all glance at Mike wondering what the hell he was thinking.

El glances at their hands. "Yes. Stuck." She replies simply.

Mike nods, turning to face everyone. "I was thinking, what they did to El's mom. It .. it made her mind see the same things over and over again, right?" he asks rhetorically. El finally grasps back at his hand, seemingly trying to keep her emotions in check.

"Okay." Max says, not seeing where he was going with this.

He takes a deep breath; his eyes pan across them. "Remember Kali."

He says and of course everyone does. Kali was El's sister. She had told them about her run in with her in Chicago. She had told them about her powers and how she did some bad things. The details of her near murder were shared only with Mike and Hopper, but everyone could tell that there was something amiss.

"El told us that she has the power to control what a person's mind is seeing. I was thinking that maybe if we could get her to come here, El's mom could uh-"

"Talk to me," El finishes for him, glancing up at him. Everyone glances at each other, and Mike's conclusion seems to elicit some looks of comprehension. It could work couldn't it? El's mom getting to talk to her, it would be a miracle. Still, doubt lingers in the air as they glance about at each other.

Hopper gazes around uncomfortably, before setting his eyes on Mike. "Look kid, are we sure that would even work. I mean we're no doctors, we don't even know what's wrong with her."

"I don't know. I mean it makes sense doesn't it?" He says looking around for some affirmation. No one says anything, their own doubts transparent on their faces. Even Becky, is eying him with a complete lack of hope.

"Yes, it does," El says breaking the silence. She turns to Hopper. "I can find her." She says. Hopper looks like he wants to say something, but

El is already heading towards the kitchen. They all shuffle and glance about as they hear the clattering of drawers and the opening of cabinets.

Finally, El bursts back into the room, a dish towel that may or may not have been used in her hand, and brushes past everyone to sit in front of the TV. Her head tilts and the TV sparks to life. Flipping quickly through so many channels all you could hear were the cutoffs of Reagan, He-Man, and other such figures before the static buzzed throughout the living room.

El sat in front of the TV; she didn't need to tell everyone to be silent because they were already deathly quiet. They watch as she travels into the void, unmoving and still. Even now they were always in awe of her powers. It feels like a long time that she remained that way. The hum of the TV the only noise in the room.

Suddenly El's nose starts to bleed, the small stream of blood trickling down her lip. They hear a sharp inhale, and El peels the dishtowel off her head. They wait with bated breath as she tries to catch her own.

"I found her," She states rubbing the cloth underneath her nose, and it stained red with her blood.

"Where?" Hopper asking on behalf of everyone.

"North, I – I can't really explain exactly where, I just know." El says. Hopper cups his chin and moseys around the living room.

"Michigan. How far do you think?" he asks

"Not far. A couple hours, It's near the water. Big place," El responds. Hopper nods contemplating once again.

"Sounds like Detroit," He deduces. He sits down on the couch, shaking his leg about. A look of confliction on his face. Mike was praying that Hopper would come to senses, couldn't he see that this would be exactly what El needed. A chance, a way for her to have some closure.

"I'm going," El declares as everyone's eyes flick to her. Hopper looks at her soft, but firm.

"Kid, I don't know if that's such a good idea," Hopper says. He doesn't mind driving all the way to Detroit, but hope was a dangerous game. What if they went through all this trouble and Kali couldn't do anything about it? He couldn't bear to see what it would do to El.

"I'm going," She says again harsher. Turning away she trots into the hallways, presumably to get some things for the journey.

The kids all get up, but Hopper quickly moves to stop them. "Woah, woah, woah. Where do you think you're going?"

"To Detroit," Dustin replies like it's obvious.

"The hell you are, I promised your parents that I keep you guys safe. I'm not going to bring you all with me while we go look for El's sister. She's a criminal, and the cops are after her. No, no way." He says ignoring all their shouts of protests.

"I don't care you're not coming and that's final!" he yells shutting them up.

El emerges from the room and stops in front of all of them. It looks like she heard that none of them were coming but didn't really seem to mind.

"Becky would mind looking after them for a while?" Hopper asks. Becky glances around at the kids, eyeing them with a reluctant gaze.

"Could this work? Could Terry actually.." She trails off.

"We're going to find out." He turns around, hoping that he sounded confident enough.

"I want to go with you." Mike says.

"No, it's safer this way. For all of you." She says looking at all of them.

"I know." Mike starts, biting his lip. "Just be careful alright?" he says grabbing her hands. She nods slowly and a tiny smile makes its way to her. She presses a brief kiss to his lips and moves away.

"Stay safe." Max says hugging her tightly. She reciprocates in full. Pretty soon it feels like she's in a dog pile because everyone in the group glomps her and she can barely move. Soon after the hug ends, and she makes her way to Hopper's side. The walk out the screen door and onto the concrete driveway. Soon, they enter the car, and El hears the engine clank to life.

"You ready kid." He asks her.

She nods determinately. "Yes."

She peers out the window, looking at all her friends' glum faces as her vision is further obscured by the trees. Even aunt Becky is there, looking somewhat woeful as well. Glancing at the house one last time, she hopes that when she returns, she can hear mama say anything but those words that haunt her.

[illegible]

Obviously, this was very large that why I decided to split it up into a two-shot. I know it was kind of heavy, but I thought it was a good idea and I hoped you guys liked it too. Let me know what you think!